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Gas crunch from cyberattack intensifies in nation's capital

A pump at a gas station in Silver Spring, Md., is out of service, notifying customers they are out of fuel, Thursday, May 13, 2021.

Associated Press
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Gas crunch from cyberattack intensifies in nation's capital

From Front

By **JEFF MARTIN, FRANK BAJAK and NOMAAN MERCHANT**

Gas shortages at the pumps have spread from the South, all but emptying stations in Washington, D.C., following a ransomware cyberattack that forced a shutdown of the nation's largest gasoline pipeline. Though the pipeline operator paid a ransom, restoring service was taking time.

As Georgia-based Colonial Pipeline reported making "substantial progress" in restoring full service, two people briefed on the matter confirmed that the company had paid the criminals a ransom of about \$5 million in cryptocurrency for the software decryption key required to unscramble their data network. The people spoke on condition they not be further identified because they were not authorized to divulge the information. Bloomberg first reported the payment. President Joe Biden declined to comment when asked by a reporter Thursday if he had been briefed about the ransom payment.

Biden also said that his administration will try to disrupt the hackers' ability to operate. The tracking service GasBuddy.com on Friday



Safety cones block access to the fuel pumps at this closed Kroger fuel station, Wednesday, May 12, 2021, in Jackson, Miss.

showed that 88% of gas stations were out of fuel in the nation's capital, 45% were out in Virginia and 39% of Maryland stations were dry. About 65% of stations were without gas in North Carolina, and nearly half were tapped out in Georgia and South Carolina.

Colonial said Thursday that operations had restarted and gasoline deliveries were being made in all of its markets, but it would take "several days" to return to normal.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said at a Friday briefing that "the vast

majority of markets and affected regions are receiving fuel at gas stations for consumers, and will continue to receive more fuel throughout the weekend and into early next week." A gas station owner in Virginia said panic buying is the problem.

"It's like a frenzy," Barry Rieger, who owns a gas station in Burke, Virginia, told WJLA-TV.

In North Carolina, at least five school systems canceled in-person learning on Friday as the gasoline supply crisis continued. Businesses were also feeling

the sting.

Mia Green, general manager at Dixie Speedway in Woodstock, Georgia, said she's heard of racetracks that canceled this weekend's races because crews might not be able to get there.

Many authorities are warning of the dangers of hoarding gas.

In South Carolina, a woman was severely burned after flipping a car that a deputy tried to pull over for a suspected stolen license plate Thursday night. The fire touched off multiple explosions due to fuel "that

she was hoarding in the trunk of the vehicle," a Pickens County sheriff's statement said.

A cyberattack by hackers who lock up computer systems and demand a ransom to release them hit the pipeline on May 7. The hackers didn't take control of the pipeline's operations, but Colonial shut it down to prevent the malware from impacting its industrial control systems.

Biden said U.S. officials do not believe the Russian government was involved, but said "we do have strong reason to believe that the criminals who did the attack are living in Russia."

Biden has promised aggressive action against DarkSide, the Russian-speaking ransomware syndicate responsible for the attack. The syndicate's public-facing darknet site went offline on Thursday, and its operators said in a cybercriminal forum post that the group had lost access to it and would be shutting down.

This does not necessarily mean U.S. or allied cyberjockeys knocked it offline. Cybersecurity experts said that DarkSide, which rents out its ransomware to partners to carry out the actual attacks, could have taken it down to prevent Western law enforcement from tracking down the rest of its infrastructure. □

Associated Press



President Joe Biden speaks on updated guidance on face mask mandates and COVID-19 response, in the Rose Garden of the White House, Thursday, May 13, 2021, in Washington.

Associated Press

By **ZEKE MILLER**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Friday put the kibosh on his predecessor's planned "National Garden of American Heroes" and revoked former President Donald Trump's executive orders

aimed at social media companies' moderation policies and branding American foreign aid.

In an executive order of his own, Biden abolished the Trump-formed task force to create the new monument, which the former president proposed last

Biden cancels Trump's planned 'Garden of American Heroes'

year. It was to have featured sculptures of dozens of American historical figures, including presidents, athletes and pop culture icons, envisioned by Trump as "a vast outdoor park that will feature the statues of the greatest Americans to ever live."

Trump himself curated the list of who was to be included — Davy Crockett, Billy Graham, Whitney Houston, Harriet Tubman and Antonin Scalia, among others — but no site was selected and the garden was never funded by Congress.

Biden's order also revoked Trump's May 2020 order calling for the Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission to investigate social media companies for labeling or removing posts or entire accounts in what Trump claimed was a restriction on free speech. That order came before Trump himself was removed from platforms like Twitter and Facebook after the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol. The president also ended Trump's December 2020 order to brand all U.S. foreign aid with a single

"logo that embodies the values and generosity of the American people."

Also revoked was Trump's June 2020 order that called for the federal government to "prosecute to the fullest extent permitted under Federal law" acts of vandalism and destruction to statues on federal property. That order came in response to the defacement of statues — particularly those honoring the Confederacy — during nationwide protests over racial injustice following the killing of George Floyd while in police custody. □

The unwitting are the target of COVID-19 falsehoods online

By ALI SWENSON and BEATRICE DUPUY
Associated Press

Dr. Michelle Rockwell lost a pregnancy in December and shared her heartache with her 30,000 Instagram followers. Weeks later, she received the COVID-19 vaccine and posted about that, too.

By February, Rockwell was getting past the grief and finally starting to experience moments of joy. But then, to her horror, social media users began using her posts to spread the false claim that she miscarried as a result of the shot.

"They said horrible things to me, like how could I possibly get the vaccine, that I was a baby killer, and that I would be infertile forever and would never have babies again," said Rockwell, a 39-year-old family medicine doctor from Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Even though she knows that research shows the vaccine is safe for pregnant women, she said the posts brought her trauma to the surface and hurt her "to the core."

From a movie prop master in Texas to a professor in New York, people across the country have found themselves swept into the misinformation maelstrom, their online posts or their very identities hijacked by anti-vaccine activists and others peddling lies about the outbreak.



Dr. Michelle Rockwell, who was targeted by vaccine opponents after she posted about her miscarriage online, looks at her Instagram page with her hijacked post marked as fake news during an interview at her home Wednesday, April 28, 2021, in Jenks, Okla.

Sharing other people's posts or photos out of context is a common tactic in the disinformation playbook because it's an "easy, cheap way to gain credibility," said Lisa Fazio, a Vanderbilt University psychology professor who studies how false claims spread.

But during the COVID-19 pandemic, experts warn, false or misleading posts can mean the difference between someone taking precautions or not.

"When you're in a situation where the world is confusing, you're trying to latch

on to what's true. A common suggestion is to listen to the experts," Fazio said. "If you have people pretending to be those experts or grabbing that credibility, then that can cause a lot of havoc."

Scott Reeder, a movie and TV prop master in Austin, Texas, who frequently shares jokes and film industry secrets with his 1 million TikTok followers, posted a short video in September demonstrating how retractable stunt knives, syringes and icepicks are used on a movie set. In December, he learned that a clip of the

footage was being misused on Facebook and Twitter. Someone had isolated the part of the video where he pushes the spring-loaded syringe into his arm, and falsely claimed that politicians overseas are using the devices to fake their COVID-19 vaccinations. Reeder was able to tamp down the falsehoods with help from TikTok followers who vouched for him and by releasing a second video outlining the misinformation. But it upsets him that his posts were used to promote a conspiracy theory he knows is false.

"I'm just trying to make people laugh with my dad jokes and my prop information," Reeder said. "But people just try to suck you in or utilize your content to push their agenda."

Robert Oswald, a professor of molecular medicine at Cornell University, hadn't even put anything on social media when he learned his name was being used in viral posts claiming the coronavirus was "imaginary and fictitious."

A bogus statement claimed Oswald had done research that found COVID-19 was "just another flu strain." Some of the posts included his professional photo and office address.

"It said I had some sort of lab in California. It said I was a virologist. None of that's true," Oswald said. "I was pretty horrified by it all, obviously."

Oswald, who doesn't study viruses in his work, disavowed the posts on his professional webpage and responded to each message he received with the truth, though some refused to believe it. "A Cornell professor warning about COVID, that's boring. The same professor saying COVID is a hoax, well, that's interesting and guarantees traffic," said Dr. Elias Aboujaoude, a psychiatrist and Stanford University professor who studies the intersection of psychology and technology. □

U.S. warns extremists may strike as virus restrictions ease

By BEN FOX
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A national terrorism alert issued Friday warns that violent extremists may take advantage of the easing of pandemic restrictions to conduct attacks.

The alert does not cite any specific threats. But it warns of potential danger from an increasingly complex and volatile mix that includes domestic terrorists inspired by various grievances, racial or ethnic hatred and influences from abroad.

Those threats were exacerbated by COVID-19, which spawned conspiracy theo-

ries and deepened anger at the government in some quarters over the shutdown of the economy. As virus conditions improve, the alert says new dangers loom.

"Violent extremists may seek to exploit the easing of COVID-19-related restrictions across the United States to conduct attacks against a broader range of targets after previous public capacity limits reduced opportunities for lethal attacks," the bulletin said.

Without naming any specific potential targets, it notes that, historically, extremists motivated by racial and

ethnic hatred have targeted religious institutions and crowded businesses or gatherings.

The National Terrorism Advisory System bulletin issued by the Department of Homeland Security is an extension of one issued earlier this year in the wake of the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol. That alert was due to expire Saturday.

It reflects a sense of anxiety over domestic extremists, particularly those motivated by racial and ethnic hatred, that has been building for months, even under the previous administration, with repeated warnings



Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas testifies before a Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee hearing on Capitol Hill, in Washington, Thursday, May 13, 2021.

Associated Press

from DHS and the Justice Department. □

Mississippi River traffic reopened under damaged bridge

By ADRIAN SAINZ and
ANDREW DeMILLO

Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP)—River traffic has reopened on the Mississippi River near Memphis, Tennessee, three days after it was closed when a crack was discovered in the Interstate 40 bridge that connects Tennessee and Arkansas, the U.S. Coast Guard said Friday. The Arkansas Department of Transportation, meanwhile, said a video taken by an inspector two years ago found "significant rust and the beginning of a crack" in the same area as the fracture that prompted the bridge's shutdown this week.

More than 60 tug boats hauling more than 1,000 barges were in line Friday to cross under the Hernando De Soto Bridge, the Coast Guard said.

Economic development officials had been concerned that an extended closure of river traffic could hurt the region's economy and have ripple effects on the nation's supply chain. The bridge itself will remain closed to vehicles indefinitely, with road traffic rerouted to Interstate 55 and the 71-year-old Memphis & Arkansas Bridge, about 3 miles (5 kilometers) south. River traffic under the six-lane bridge was shut down Tuesday after inspectors found a "significant frac-



In this undated image released by the Tennessee Department of Transportation shows a crack is in a steel beam on the Interstate 40 bridge, near Memphis, Tenn.

ture" in one of two 900-foot (274-meter) horizontal steel beams that are crucial for the bridge's integrity, said Lorie Tudor, director of the Arkansas Department of Transportation.

Engineers wanted to ensure the bridge could stand on its own before reopening river traffic.

"Based on information provided to us by the Tennessee Department of Transportation, the Coast Guard has determined that transit under the I-40 bridge is safe for maritime traffic," Coast Guard Capt. Ryan Rhodes, captain of the Port of Memphis, said in a statement.

The Arkansas Department of Transportation on Friday said an image captured by an inspector's drone video

in May 2019 showed evidence of damage on the lower side of the bridge, the same area as the crack that was discovered this week. DOT spokesman Dave Parker said the damage was found by a consulting firm that was inspecting the bridge's cables that year.

The bridge remained closed as negotiations intensified between the White House and a group of Republican senators over a potential infrastructure package. Democrats have said the shutdown highlights the urgent need for more infrastructure funding.

Republicans have called for a infrastructure plan with a smaller price tag than President Joe Biden's

and with a narrower definition of public works.

The Arkansas Trucking Association on Friday estimated the closure would cost the trucking industry at least \$2.4 million a day because of the longer routes to cross the river. The group used data provided by the American Transportation Research Institute.

Arkansas Trucking Association President Shannon Newton said the trip on the I-40 bridge between the two states averaged eight minutes. Since the I-40 bridge closure, trips on the I-55 bridge being used as the closest alternate route have averaged 84 minutes. "Even if you're looking at 6-8 weeks, that's an incredible expenditure that the

industry can't simply absorb," Newton said.

Tennessee's transportation department said there's no indication the bridge is continuing to deteriorate and said designers were working on an interim repair plan that would rely on steel rods that would be attached to the bridge and span over the fractured section. Designers were also looking at the possibility of installing a steel plate to beef up the fractured section.

The interim plan would allow time for a new bridge component to be fabricated to replace the damaged section, the agency said.

In an inspection for the 2020 National Bridge Inventory report, the Federal Highway Administration said the I-40 bridge checked out in fair condition overall, with all primary structure elements sound and only some minor cracks and chips in the overall structure. Its structural evaluation checked out "somewhat better than minimum adequacy to tolerate being left in place as is." However, height and width clearances for over-size vehicles were "basically intolerable requiring high priority of corrective action," the inspectors found. Tennessee recommended "bridge deck replacement with only incidental widening." □

Flames engulf cargo ship's remains off U.S. coast; no injuries



In this photo provided by the Altamaha Riverkeeper, smoke pours from the remnants of the capsized cargo ship Golden Ray on Friday, May 14, 2021, off St. Simons Island, Ga.

By RUSS BYNUM
Associated Press

SAVANNAH, Ga. (AP)—Fire burned Friday inside the re-

mains of an overturned cargo ship being dismantled along the Georgia coast. Susan Inman of the Altama-

ha Riverkeeper conservation group told The Associated Press she could see flames shooting from the open ends and the top of the Golden Ray on Friday afternoon as she watched from a boat about 300 yards (275 meters) away near St. Simons Island. Thick black smoke was filling the sky, she said, and loud several loud popping sounds could be heard from the shipwreck. She said a the fire was being sprayed with hoses from the towering crane being used to dismantle the ship. Video of the scene showed a boat equipped with a wa-

ter cannon dousing the fire as well. No injuries had been reported and all demolition crew members near the shipwreck were safely evacuated, said Coast Guard Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael Himes, a spokesman for the multi-agency command in charge of the demolition. Himes said flames flared up inside the wreck Friday afternoon as workers used cutting torches along the hull to create a path for the 400 feet (122 meters) of anchor chain being used to tear the ship apart with brute force. "It is considerable at this

time. It picked up very quickly," Himes said of the blaze. "The good news is, because we planned for fires and we planned for the need to evacuate in the case of those fires, all of our crews are accounted for."

Himes said the fire was likely sparked by one of the cutting torches, even though crews were pumping sea water onto the ship as a fire suppression measure. He didn't know what was fueling the blaze, but said it's possibly residual fuel still aboard the ship as well as cars that remain inside its cargo decks. □

Diplomats, donors concerned about sex abuse reports at WHO

By MARIA CHENG

AP Medical Writer

LONDON (AP) — British, European and American diplomats and donors have voiced serious concerns about how the World Health Organization handled sex abuse allegations involving its own staff during an outbreak of Ebola in Congo, as reported this week by The Associated Press.

On Tuesday, the AP published an investigation documenting that senior WHO management was informed of multiple sex abuse allegations involving at least two of its doctors during the epidemic in 2018.

A notarized contract obtained by the AP showed that two WHO staffers signed off on an agreement between WHO's Dr. Jean-Paul Ngandu and a young woman he allegedly impregnated in Congo. In it, Ngandu promised to pay the young woman money, cover her pregnancy costs and buy her a plot of land. The contract was made "to protect the integrity and reputation of the organization," Ngandu said.

"The U.K. has a zero toler-



In this file photo dated Friday, Aug. 10, 2018, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director General, speaks to a health official at a newly established Ebola response center in Beni, Democratic Republic of Congo.

ance approach when it comes to sexual exploitation and harassment and that extends to all international organizations that we fund," said Simon Manley, the U.K.'s ambassador to the U.N. in Geneva. "We are speaking with WHO and other major donors as a matter of urgency to establish the facts." Britain is

WHO's second biggest donor, after the U.S.

In a statement, the U.S. State Department said more must be done to address sex abuse issues at WHO. Asked about the AP investigation, officials said they were requesting more information about the allegations. "Those responsible for any abuse must be held

accountable," it said.

WHO has declined to comment on the specific allegations reported by the AP and said it is waiting for the results of a panel created last October to investigate sexual abuse during the Congo outbreak involving WHO staffers.

"What's alarming is that WHO seems to be keeping

this abuse quiet and not publicly condemning these allegations," said Clare Wenham, an assistant professor of global health policy at the London School of Economics, who has studied gender and funding issues at WHO. "There's a lot of talk about giving WHO more money but I don't think any government should be committing to that until we know it's an organization we can trust." The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the agency's third-largest funder, said it expects U.N. agencies to conduct thorough investigations into sexual abuse as quickly as possible.

"Our role as a funder is to hold organizations that receive grants from the foundation to the highest standards of transparency and accountability, and to insist that they take steps to prevent misconduct in the future," the foundation said. Lawrence Gostin, director of the WHO Collaborating Center on Global Health Law at Georgetown University, said the ultimate responsibility for WHO's Ebola response lies with director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. □

Associated Press

Russian bailiffs show up at U.S. broadcaster's office

IMOSCOW (AP) — Russian court bailiffs showed up Friday at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Moscow bureau to notify it about the launch of enforcement proceedings over unpaid fines as part of mounting pressure on the U.S.-funded broadcaster.

RFE/RL President Jamie Fly said the broadcaster's Moscow bank accounts were also frozen Friday in what he denounced as a serious escalation in the Russian government's campaign to drive it out of the country.

"RFE/RL will continue to fight these desperate attempts by the Kremlin to censor uncomfortable truths," Fly said in a statement.

"We will not be silenced by these heavy-handed

tactics and we will not abandon our Russian audience."

Last year, Russia's media watchdog Roskomnadzor ordered the media designated as foreign agents, including RFE/RL, to add a lengthy statement to news

reports, social media posts and audiovisual materials specifying that the content was created by an outlet "performing the functions of a foreign agent."

The move, which applies to nongovernmental political organizations and media

receiving foreign funding, has been widely criticized as aiming to discredit critical reporting and dissent. The term "foreign agent" carries strong pejorative connotations in Russia.

Roskomnadzor has filed 520 violation cases against RFE/RL, which could entail fines totaling \$2.4 million.

In a call with reporters, Fly said that the broadcaster has refused to pay the fines because it considers them unlawful.

"We have been very clear throughout this that we will not pay these fines," he said.

"We believe that the labeling is illegitimate, it violates Russia's own constitution. We aren't going to back down in the face of this pressure."

The broadcaster has asked

the European Court of Human Rights to order Russia to refrain from enforcing the fines until the court can make a full ruling on Roskomnadzor's moves, which RFE/RL contends violates the European Convention on Human Rights.

RFE/RL isn't alone in facing the "foreign agent" labeling. Over the past weeks, the Russian Justice Ministry has designated online media outlet Meduza, Moscow-based First Anti-corruption Media (PASMI), and Netherlands-based VTimes.io as "foreign agents."

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has condemned Russia's mounting pressure on the media as a sign of the Kremlin's weakness. □



In this Friday, Jan. 15, 2010 file photo, the headquarters of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) is seen with the United States flag in the foreground, in Prague.

Associated Press

EXPLAINER: Why is Gaza almost always mired in conflict?

By The Associated Press
GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — The Gaza Strip was pounded this week by hundreds of Israeli strikes from sea, land and air, while the enclave's militant Hamas rulers fired hundreds of rockets into Israel. It's the fourth round of major conflict between Israel and Hamas since 2008, with the tiny enclave's more than 2 million Palestinian residents bearing the brunt of the deaths and the destruction. The latest eruption of violence has raised the specter of another devastating war and once again drawn international attention to the impoverished, densely populated strip. Here's a look at the Gaza Strip and its place in the Middle East conflict.

A NARROW COASTAL STRIP
 Gaza, sandwiched between Israel and Egypt, is just 25 miles (40 kilometers) long and six miles (10 kilometers) wide. It was part of the British-ruled Palestine Mandate before the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation, when it came under Egypt's control. Large numbers of Palestinians who fled or were driven from what is now Israel



Palestinians inspect their destroyed houses following overnight Israeli airstrikes in town of Beit Hanoun, northern Gaza Strip, Friday, May 14, 2021.

ended up in Gaza, and the refugees and their descendants now number 1.4 million, accounting for more than half of Gaza's population. The first Palestinian intifada, or uprising, erupted in Gaza in 1987 the same year Hamas was founded and later spread to the other occupied territories. The Oslo peace process in the 1990s established the Palestinian Authority and gave it limited autonomy in Gaza

and parts of the occupied West Bank.

THE HAMAS TAKEOVER

Israel withdrew its troops and Jewish settlements from Gaza in 2005, after a second and far more violent intifada. The following year, Hamas won a landslide victory in Palestinian elections. That triggered a power struggle with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah party, culminating in

a week of clashes in 2007 that left Hamas in control of Gaza.

The militant group has remained firmly in power through three wars and a 14-year blockade.

THE BLOCKADE

Israel and Egypt imposed the crippling blockade after the Hamas takeover. Israel says it's needed to keep Hamas and other militant groups from importing arms. Rights groups say the

blockade is a form of collective punishment. The closures, along with years of misrule and Hamas' long-running feud with the Palestinian Authority, have devastated Gaza's economy. Unemployment hovers at around 50%, power outages are frequent and the tap water is badly polluted. Palestinians face heavy movement restrictions that make it difficult to travel abroad for work, study or to visit family, and often refer to Gaza as the world's largest open-air prison.

THE WARS

Hamas and Israel have fought three wars and several smaller battles. The worst so far was the 2014 war, which lasted for 50 days and killed some 2,200 Palestinians, more than half of them civilians. Seventy-three people were killed on the Israeli side.

Israel's airstrikes and incursions into Gaza have left vast swaths of destruction, with entire neighborhoods reduced to rubble and thousands forced to shelter in U.N. schools and other facilities. Israel says it makes every effort to avoid civilian casualties and accuses Hamas of using Gazans as human shields. □

Associated Press

Penpa Tsering elected president of Tibetan exile government

By ASHWINI BHATIA
Associated Press
DHARMSALA, India (AP) — Penpa Tsering, the former speaker of Tibet's parliament-in-exile, has been

elected the new president of the exile government, the election commissioner announced Friday. He will succeed Lobsang Sangay, who completes

his second five-year term at the end of May, Election Commissioner Wangdu Tsering said in Dharamsala, a northern Indian town where spiritual leader the Dalai Lama has been living since he fled Tibet after a failed uprising against Chinese rule in 1959. Nearly 64,000 Tibetans living in exile in India, Nepal, North America, Europe, Australia and elsewhere voted in the election, which was held in two rounds in January and April. It was the third direct election of the Tibetan exile leadership since the Dalai Lama withdrew from any political role in the running of the exile government in 2011. Penpa Tsering, 53, was elected to its parliament

in 1996 and became its speaker in 2008. The 45 people elected to the exile parliament include 10 each from the three traditional provinces of Tibet, two each from the five religious constituencies, two each from Tibetan communities in North America and Europe, and one from the Tibetan community in Australasia. Formed in 1959, Tibet's government-in-exile now called the Central Tibetan Administration has executive, judicial and legislative branches. China says Tibet has been part of its territory since the mid-13th century, and its Communist Party has governed the Himalayan region since 1951. But many Tibetans say they were ef-

fectively independent for most of their history, and that the Chinese government wants to exploit the resource-rich region while crushing its cultural identity. China doesn't recognize the Tibetan government-in-exile and hasn't held any dialogue with representatives of the Dalai Lama since 2010. India considers Tibet as part of China, though it hosts the Tibetan exiles. Some Tibetan groups advocate independence for Tibet, since little progress has been made in talks with China. Beijing accuses the Dalai Lama of seeking to separate Tibet from China, which he denies. Penpa Tsering supports the Dalai Lama's position. □



In this Sept. 2, 2013 file photo, Prime Minister of the Tibetan government-in-exile Lobsang Sangay, right, listens to the Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament Penpa Tsering during the Tibetan Democracy Day celebrations at the Tsuglakhang temple in Dharamsala, India.

Associated Press

South Sudan, nearing 10 years old, struggles for stability

By MAURA AJAK

Associated Press

JUBA, South Sudan (AP) —

As South Sudan approaches 10 years of being an independent country, many challenges remain for the world's youngest state.

A 2018 peace deal ending a five-year civil war has faced delays in implementation. A government of national unity was formed only last year. Millions of people remain in need of humanitarian assistance ahead of the anniversary of independence in July.

One major problem has been the formation of a unified security force, which has been hampered by lack of funding and political will. More than 25,000 trainees have yet to graduate from centers across South Sudan, many struggling without regular meals, medical care or even a curriculum. Many trainees have abandoned the centers.

Life in the centers has been especially difficult for women, who had hoped that serving in the security forces would be a stable way to help provide for their families. Their ambitions reflect those of many across South Sudan who saw lives and livelihoods shattered by the conflict.



In this Saturday, June 27, 2020 file photo, trainees parade with the wooden mock guns which they use to train with, during the visit of the defense minister to a military training center in Owiny Ki-Bul, Eastern Equatoria, South Sudan.

The Associated Press last year explored the lives of women in the centers and followed up as frustrations mounted about the delayed timing of their graduation.

One trainee, Happifanya Ogwon James, told the AP she has been waiting to graduate for almost a year. During that time she became pregnant and found herself begging for larger food portions. She alleged that food is distributed according to ethnicity, a

practice that could worsen tensions in a country where intercommunal violence is still a deadly threat.

"I do not believe that the graduation will be soon," James said.

Another trainee, Taban Albert, alleged that they were given expired food.

"Do they mean to kill us?" he asked.

He also alleged that funding of the centers is so tight that when a trainee dies, other trainees are told to pay for the burial.

"I've been in training for 11 months, so where do I get the money?" Albert asked. Trainee Nancy Vincent said that with most people at the centers not receiving any salary, "we are washing our clothes with sand in the stream as if we were still in the bush."

The frustrations echo among some of South Sudan's security leaders.

Col. James Khor Chuol, the deputy chief instructor at the Rajaf Police Training Center, asserted that

38 people there had died, some due to lack of medicine.

"If somebody is sick, we are going to rush her or him to the hospital, but it will take time," he said.

South Sudan's defense minister, Angelina Teny, acknowledged "issues" in implementing the peace deal but defended the agreement.

"If there is any South Sudanese who thinks there is an alternative to this agreement, they'd better come to their senses, and they really should join us in ensuring its implementation," she told The Associated Press in an interview this week.

The defense minister also expressed concern about the training centers.

They "were not adequately prepared for lactating mothers, for pregnant women, and also people are human beings, you know, some women got pregnant there in the training centers," she said. "This all has not been catered for. We take it now as a lesson for the next phase."

Another problem was the lack of screening of people before they were admitted to training centers "because there was that pressure that something must happen," Teny said. □

Associated Press

Turkish firm shuts down power supply for crisis-hit Lebanon

BEIRUT (AP) — A Turkish company that provides electricity to Lebanon from two power barges shut down its operations on Friday over delayed payments. The move is expected to increase outages in the crisis-hit Mediterranean country.

The company Karpowership has been threatening to shut down its power supply to Lebanon for weeks and said it took the decision Friday because of 18 months of overdue payments. However the decision comes after a Lebanese prosecutor's decision last week to seize the ships pending an investigation into corruption and graft allegations. The company

has called those accusations baseless.

The company provides around 370 megawatts about a quarter of Lebanon's supply through two electricity barges that have been anchored off the Lebanese coast since 2013.

"For 18 months, we have been exceedingly flexible with the state, continually supplying power without payment or a payment plan, because the country was already facing very hard times," the Karpowership statement said.

"However, no company can operate in an environment with such direct and undue risk," it added.

The decision is expected to

decrease electricity supply by about four hours a day in a country that already suffers prolonged electricity cuts. It comes at a time the Central Bank and government are considering ending fuel subsidies, a move that would lead to a sharp increase in the price of gasoline and diesel, making even generator subscriptions unaffordable to most Lebanese.

Blackouts have been a fixture of life in this Mediterranean country since the 1975-1990 civil war, relying mostly on imported diesel for the powerful generators cartel that lights up people's houses in the absence of government electricity

Beirut residents set their routines around three-hour cuts that determine when they can turn on their air conditioning in the sum-

mer and water boiler in the winter. Outside the capital, the outages can last up to 12 hours or more. □



In this July 16, 2018, file photo, shows the Karadeniz Powership Orhan Bey is docked as a second floating power station waits off the coast at Jiyeh, south of Beirut, Lebanon.

Associated Press

Navy resumes drug hunting in Caribbean

SAVANETA —The patrol ship Zr. Ms. Holland left for the Caribbean from Den Helder in the Netherlands last Thursday. As a result, Defense will have a station ship in the area again after a few months.

HNLMS Holland is expected to arrive on Wednesday May 26th, through a ceremonial entry into Curaçao. During her time in the Caribbean, the crew focuses, among other things, on operations against terrorism and drug and weapons trafficking. The armed forces thus fulfill their constitutional tasks, such as maintaining the international legal order. The operations take place in collaboration with chain partners such as the Caribbean Coast Guard and the American Joint Interagency Task Force South. HNLMS Holland is an Oceangoing Patrol Vessel (OPV) and has an NH90 maritime combat helicopter on board. At the end of December last year, the previous station ship Zr. Ms. Groningen was shipped back to the Netherlands due to technical problems. Prior to that, the ship's crew intercepted thousands of kilos of drugs, among other things. □



DEZHI presents the Aruba investment summit 2021

ORANJESTAD - As part of Aruba's investment-promoting initiatives, the Department of Economic Affairs, Trade and Industry (DEZHI) is organizing the Aruba Investment Summit 2021.

This important three-day event will take place virtually on May 31, June 1 & 2,

2021, and will include international speakers as well as Top Local Leaders, Executives, and Entrepreneurs.

About the Aruba Investment Summit

This summit aims to attract both local and foreign investors by highlighting Aruba as an investment destination and highlighting



the many business opportunities in Aruba's Promising Sectors. Participants will receive in-depth knowledge about investment projects in Aruba, test hub capabilities, testimonials, make valuable contacts, and much more.

Three-day program

More than 10 Experts, Leaders, Executives, and Entrepreneurs from top local companies will share their investment insights from Aruba. Participants will also be inspired by world-

renowned keynote speaker Mr. Bradley J. Sugars, owner, author, and business coach of the multi-million dollar franchise ActionCOACH, and CEO of more than 9 companies. The speakers will share their knowledge of creating a more sustainable economy through Aruba's promising sectors and the business opportunities this provides for both local and foreign investors.

Register today

During the Aruba Invest-

ment Summit 2021, participants will learn all the ins and outs about doing business in Aruba, the promising sectors and all the business opportunities out there. In a nutshell, they will be able to connect, network and learn. So don't miss this opportunity! Register today at <https://bit.ly/3o1a0tA>.

More information or questions?

Please contact Zuleika Quant at DEACI via email z.quant@deaci.aw. □



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By Zuleika Quant

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Welcome to Tuscany Residence Aruba: Aruba's Luxury Residential Resort



NOORD — Tuscany Residence Aruba is found in one of the most popular neighborhoods of Aruba, close to the shopping and night-life of Palm Beach, and best of all it is within walking distance of the finest white beaches and clear blue ocean. Tuscany Residence Aruba brings luxury living to a new level.

180 exclusive properties will be built suitable for everyone's wishes. The buildings varies greatly in layout and offers amazing views. You can choose from 2 or 3-story villas with a private pool and a rooftop terrace, condominiums, townhouses. Tuscany Residence Aruba enjoys an abundance of luxury amenities and services. Soon a new concept consisting of 18, 1 and 2-story water villas. Everything is aimed at providing homeowners and holiday makers of Tuscany Residence Aruba with a relaxing stay.

Dutch design

Tuscany Residence Aruba is a residence that is currently being built and will develop in the coming years into a luxury residential resort with various types of homes and many amenities such as swimming pools, restaurant, bar, offices, meeting rooms, gym, wellness and more. The combination of the beautiful Dutch modern international architecture and the Aruban palm trees creates a luxurious Aruban feeling and relaxed atmosphere in this resort. Tuscany Residence Aruba is the perfect choice for couples and families. Bas de Groot, Managing Director of Tuscany Residence Aruba adds, "We differ from traditional building, our design distinguishes itself." At 8 minutes' walk from Palm Beach, designed in a European style with high-quality materials, on property land and with buying possibilities from condos to townhouses to villas, Tuscany Residence is a dream comes true. "We just completed the community pool and the first villa. Eight townhouses are ready and three are still available. There is lots to see, you are invited. Our quality will convince you."

We take care of it all

De Groot adds, "Our project is in continuous construction which builds confidence. Aside of the town houses and villa you can see the community pool now, providing you with the idea of style and quality of our residence." He continues saying that maintenance, property management, rental program and safety are taken care of. "You can log in from abroad and manage your property for rental or view your administration." The great thing about Tuscany is that it offers everything equal to a resort but you do not need to wait for an elevator to bring you up, worry about parking space or noisy neighbors. "We have got space and different size offerings making this more a community feel rather than a packed condo building." He also emphasizes that the location is one of the best on Aruba as it is quiet and close to Palm Beach.



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3 bedrooms, 2.5 bathrooms

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Still 3 Available.



Luxury Villas

3 and 4 bedrooms, 3.5 and 4.5 bathrooms, Private Pool

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Coming Soon: 18 Luxury Water Villas

The Concept: 18- 2 and 3 bedroom villas around 1 communal pool with covered terrace and garden at the pool side. Soon we will start the pre-sale and if you are interested please contact us!

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- Are you looking for a safe, quiet, residential area where you will meet a mix of local and foreign owners? Do you feel for a warm community with amenities like wellness, gym, restaurants, pools and this all within a structure where the residence takes care of your property management while you are not here? Can the highest European quality and solid working structure take away your preoccupations while you are home? Than meet us, we are here to convince you with quality! ☐

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Elliott Loonstra on his way to the Paralympics 2020 in Tokyo

ORANJESTAD — Recently, Paralympian Elliott 'Lefty' Loonstra received the official invitation to be compete at the Paralympics 2021 in Tokyo Japan. Loonstra is the first athlete of Aruba to be invited to such competition. The competition will take place on August 24th up to September 5th, 2021. Due to the Covid-19 situation and taking all protocols into consideration it was decided that spectators will not be permitted at the event and in this case the event will be transmitted online through different social platforms and television.

When Elliott Loonstra began training in Para taekwondo, he was holding gym sessions on a beach in Aruba. He would meet his coach at 5 a.m. – before tourists would take over – to run, stretch and practise kicks. Eventually, they upgraded their training after landing a reasonable deal with one of the few gyms on the south Caribbean island of Aruba, whose population is approximately 112,000.

While the COVID-19 pandemic adds another layer of challenge, Loonstra is still hopeful for next year's Paralympic Games in To-



kyo. If he secures his targeted goal, he could become the only second athlete from Aruba to compete at a Paralympic Games; swimmer Jesus de Marchena Acevedo was Aruba's first Paralympian at Rio 2016. At first, Loonstra didn't realise the historical implications and the breadth of the Paralympic Movement. That was until his first multi-sporting competition almost a year ago at the Lima 2019 Parapan American Games. "On the flight to Lima I was just strangely calm because I didn't understand how big the event

was," Loonstra recalled. "But when I walked into the Opening Ceremony, if you find the clip of my face, you can see the moment when I'm like 'OK, I understand how big this is now'. "And immediately it changed my attitude of 'OK we're just at another tournament having a fight' to 'Oh no no no', this is the next level, high-level tournament. Everyone is watching, you're representing your country ... You're the dude, let's do this, we believe in you.' That was a huge shift in perspectives."

He thought other Aruban



Para athletes would join him in Lima, Peru. But when lining up to carry his country's flag into the Opening Ceremony, he found himself alone in a sea of 1,850 athletes.

"It was a very unique experience to me because it's kinda like finding a whole different tribe of people you can relate to," described Loonstra, who lost in his opening round to Brazil's Alexandre dos Santos in the up-to 75kg K44. "For example, me in Aruba, I don't have other people with a disability so a lot of the times I feel I'm the only guy here with a disability. But once I was there and saw everyone, everyone is just rocking out, showing off how talented they are." "I remember the first day I was there, a guy did a double spin kick, and I'm just looking at him like 'Wait. What? How did you do that?'"

Kicking off the journey

Loonstra's family owns a scuba shop. His coach, also a scuba diver, approached Loonstra one day in 2017 and asked if he would be interested in Para taekwondo.

Loonstra, 28 at the time, was interested in mixed-martial arts (MMA) fighting and thought Para taekwondo would be a good pipeline.

A year later, he was fully absorbed into the Para sport. They started training with the basics on the beach and in his coach's backyard. Overtime, Loonstra dropped weight from 102kg to 79kg, and eventually they locked themselves in a gym that offered them

adequate training space.

In 2018, he was invited to a camp in Sao Paulo, Brazil, which allowed him to diversify his training; the camp was hosted by the National Paralympic Committee Development Programme.

"That also was a great experience because in Aruba - when it comes to training - it's just me and my coach. And although it's amazing to train with a great coach, it's just the two of us. It can get repetitive," he said.

"When we went to Brazil, I got a lot of action and we made new friends so much so that one of the coaches there invited us back last year for about three months to train with them."

Training through COVID-19

Loonstra was set to compete in four competitions in 2020 to secure ranking points toward Tokyo 2020.

Although that has changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, he remains adamant on achieving his Paralympic debut. He practises techniques in his yard such as kicks, but has to adapt to the lack of gym equipment for strength training. The pandemic has also opened up a new hobby – aquaponics, which is growing plants using water and fish, opposed to dirt. So far, he has had success growing sweet potatoes and rosemary. "I'm definitely planning to still compete in taekwondo," Loonstra reassured, joking.

"When people ask me 'What do you do?' I tell them 'I kick people'. Immediately they look at me and are like 'What?' And I say 'No no no. I'm an athlete'." □



Canadian National ups offer to seal deal for U.S. railroad

By JOSH FUNK

AP Business Writer

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Canadian National sweetened its offer to buy Kansas City Southern railroad Thursday and derailed rival Canadian Pacific's bid for the railroad that handles traffic in the United States and Mexico.

Kansas City Southern said Thursday that it determined Canadian National's revised \$33.6 billion offer was better than the \$25 billion agreement it had with Canadian Pacific.

CN's latest offer still includes \$200 in cash for each Kansas City Southern share, but the Canadian railroad is now also offering 1.129 shares of its stock. Previously, Canadian National had been offering 1.059 shares of CN common stock for each share. The transaction also includes about \$3.8 billion in Kansas City Southern's debt.

Canadian National President and CEO JJ Ruest said the combined railroad will connect Canada with the United States and Mexico and take advantage of the expected growth in trade between the three countries. "Our proposal offers a clear path to completion and is structured in a way that gives KCS shareholders both greater immediate value and the opportunity to participate in the future upside of the combined company," Ruest said.



A Canadian National rail worker stands on an idle locomotive as protesters opposed to the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion block rail lines, in Burnaby, British Columbia, Friday, Nov. 27, 2020.

Associated Press

Kansas City Southern has been reviewing both bids and holding talks with its Canadian suitors since CN joined the bidding last month.

Canadian Pacific officials have said they believe the Canadian National deal would have trouble getting approved by regulators who are concerned about its impact on competition. Canadian Pacific reiterated Thursday that it doesn't plan to increase its bid for Kansas City Southern, and officials with that railroad said they still believe their combination is the most likely to be approved by

regulators. CP said it would respond to Kansas City Southern within the next five days. "It is not surprising that CN would raise its offer, and it only highlights CN's recognition of the significant regulatory risk/challenges associated with its anti-competitive bid," Canadian Pacific said in a statement.

Canadian Pacific has said combining Kansas City Southern and Canadian National would hurt competition because both those companies have rail lines that compete for business between the Midwest and the Gulf Coast. Cana-

dian Pacific's network connects to Kansas City Southern near its headquarters in Kansas City, Missouri, but those two railroads don't overlap elsewhere.

Canadian National has said it doesn't believe its merger with Kansas City Southern will hurt competition, and it is confident it could address any competitive concerns later in the review process. CN officials said every other major railroad has a north-south route somewhere in the country that could compete for traffic.

Canadian Pacific will still have a chance to revise

its bid in response within the next five days or walk away with a \$700 million breakup fee. U.S. regulators haven't approved any major railroad mergers since the 1990s, and officials have said that generally any deal involving one of the six largest railroads must enhance competition and serve the public interest. The Surface Transportation Board has also said it would consider whether any deal would destabilize the industry and prompt additional mergers. The board adopted tough rules for major railroad mergers after service problems developed after railroad mergers in the 1990s. Canadian National plans to set up a voting trust that would acquire Kansas City Southern and own the railroad, so it could continue operating independently while the Surface Transportation Board reviews the deal to determine whether to approve it. That review could take more than 18 months. If regulators ultimately reject the deal, then the voting trust would sell off Kansas City Southern, so it could remain independent. It's not yet clear whether this Kansas City Southern deal will trigger a new round of railroad mergers. Some analysts have said that Canadian Pacific may seek another partner if it loses out on Kansas City Southern. □

General Mills dives deeper into the pet business

By MATT OTT

AP Business Writer

SILVER SPRING, Md. (AP) —

General Mills is diving further into the red-hot pet food market, acquiring Tyson Foods' animal treat business for \$1.2 billion in cash, the companies said Friday. Best known for Cheerios, Betty Crocker and Pillsbury, General Mills in 2018 entered the pet food business in a big way, spending \$8 billion to acquire Blue Buffalo, a premium brand.

Then the pandemic hit, fueling the biggest surge of pet adoptions in recent memory.

About 12.6 million U.S. households got a new pet last year after the pandemic was declared in March 2020, according to a COVID-19 Pulse Study by the American Pet Products Association.

When General Mills released quarterly earnings this spring, it became clear that the animals taken home from shelters during the pandemic were not the only winners.

Third-quarter net sales from General Mills' pet business, which ended in February, jumped 14 percent to \$436 million, and through nine

months of the fiscal year, sales are up 13 percent to \$1.29 billion.

Under General Mills, Blue Buffalo's sales have grown at a 10% compound rate, with the last 12 months bringing in more than \$1.7 billion. Profit from Blue Buffalo are growing even faster, from about \$300 million in 2017, before General Mills acquired it, to more than \$400 million in the past 12 months. That is the period that ran the gamut of the global pandemic.

Three years ago when General Mills said it would buy Blue Buffalo for \$8 billion, a



In this Feb. 23, 2018 file photo, the logo for General Mills appears above a trading post on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange.

Associated Press

number of industry analysts had sticker shock. □

Passing on your password? Streaming services are past it

By MAE ANDERSON
AP Technology Writer
NEW YORK (AP) — Many of us were taught to share as kids. Now streaming services ranging from Netflix to



This Aug. 13, 2020 file photo shows a logo for Netflix on a remote control in Portland, Ore.

Associated Press

Center for Internet and Technology. Among millennials it's even higher: 56% of online adults ages 18- to 29 have shared passwords.

"With the cost of all the streaming platforms bought together equaling a cable bill -- which it was supposed to eliminate -- I think it's a great thing to be able to share your login to help family and friends save a few bucks," said Ryan Saffell, 39, an IT director from Las Vegas.

Another study found more than a quarter of all video streaming services are used by multiple households. That includes a family or friend sharing the account they pay for outside of the household, or, less commonly, several households splitting the cost. And 16% of all households have at least one service that is fully paid for by someone else according to the study by Leichtman Research Group. That increases to 26% for 18- to 34-year-olds.

Sharing or stealing streaming service passwords cost an estimated \$2.5 billion in revenue in 2019 according to the most recent data from research firm Park Associates, and that's expected to rise to nearly \$3.5 billion by 2024.

That may be a small fraction of the \$119.69 billion eMarketer predicts people will spend on U.S. video subscriptions this year. But subscriber growth is slowing, and costs are increasing.

Companies are investing dizzying sums to produce own original movies and shows and stand out from competitors. Disney+ said it'll spend up to \$16 billion a year on new content for Disney+, Hulu and ESPN+ by fiscal 2024. Netflix is expected to spend \$19 billion on originals this year, research firm Banker estimates.

"Programming spend is doubling, or in some cases tripling and quadrupling, so you have to fund it somewhere," CFRA's Amobi said. "Most services are looking at losses for the next few years before they break even. So they can use every subscription that they can get."

Amazon to Disney+ want us to stop.

That's the new edict from the giants of streaming media, who are hoping to discourage the common practice of sharing account passwords without alienating subscribers who've grown accustomed to the hack.

Password sharing is estimated to cost streaming services several billion dollars a year in lost revenue. That's a small problem now for an industry that earns about \$120 billion annually, but something it needs to address as spending on distinctive new programming skyrockets. Amazon's upcoming "Lord of the Rings" series will reportedly cost \$450 million for its first season alone - more than four times the cost of a season of HBO's "Game of Thrones."

"Frankly the industry has been gravitating toward that. It's a question of when, not if," said CFRA analyst Tuna Amobi. "The landscape seems to be pretty set in terms of these new entrants, so it seems like a good time to get a much better handle on subscribers." It's a tricky balance.

The video companies have long offered legitimate ways for multiple people to use a service, by creating profiles or by offering tiers of service with different levels of screen sharing allowed. Stricter password sharing rules might spur more people to bite the bullet and pay full price for their own subscription. But a too-tough clampdown could also alienate users

and drive them away.

In March some Netflix users began to get popups asking them to verify their account by entering a code sent via email or text, but also gave them the choice of verifying "later." Netflix did not say how many people were part of the test or if it was only in the U.S. or elsewhere.

"They'll be taking a very cautious approach to it," Amobi said. "Handled the wrong way, there's always a downside to a move like this."

The test comes at a crucial time for Netflix. Last year's pandemic-fueled subscriber growth is slowing. It remains the streaming service to beat with more than 200 million subscribers globally. But a bevy of new competitors have emerged, including Disney+, which is cheaper and has quickly snapped up 100 million subscribers in less than two years.

When Disney+ launched in 2019, then CEO Bob Iger said the service was modeled on sharing.

"We're setting up a service that is very family-friendly, we expect families to be able to consume it - four live streams at a time, for instance," he said in a CNBC interview. "We'll watch it carefully with various tools, technology tools, that we have available to us to monitor it. But it's obviously something we have to watch."

Roughly two in five online adults have shared passwords to online accounts with friends or family members, according to the Pew

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

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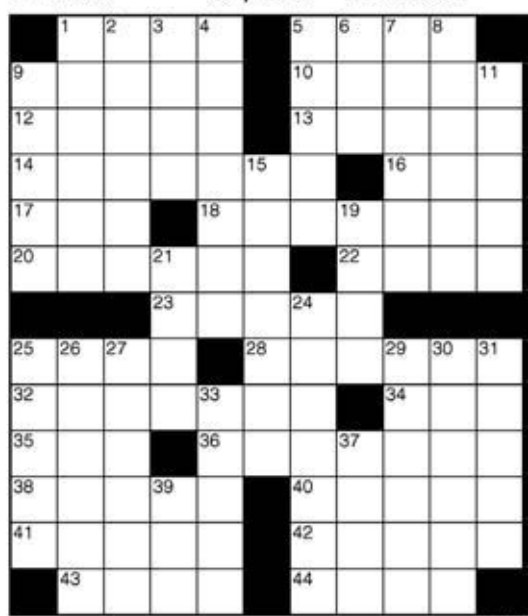
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14 Stuck
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17 Tom Collins base
18 Stuck
20 Banquette's cousin
22 Annual race, for short
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36 Peeved
38 Blue egg tender
40 Croc's kin
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15 Cleek
19 Storage sites
21 Captured
24 Power failures
25 Deceitful bunch
26 Like some soups
27 Panama explorer
29 Seasonal store employees
30 Dolts
31 Cartoon dog
33 Low cards in pinochle
37 Mystery writer
39 Nettle



Yesterday's answer



5-15

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

5-15

CRYPTOQUOTE

S DCY C LQACU QACFAQ IX
XCSQE UCHAY. S UQSAF UI
QACF UTA AVUSQA XCSQE
UCHA YARUSIV IX UTA

HSKQCQE. — KAPAQHE RHACQE
Yesterday's Cryptoquote: INVESTING SHOULD BE
MORE LIKE WATCHING PAINT DRY OR WATCHING
GRASS GROW. IF YOU WANT EXCITEMENT ... GO
TO LAS VEGAS. — PAUL SAMUELSON

Free offices with a view: 4 lighthouses, courtesy of feds

By WILLIAM J. KOLE

Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP)

— Dreading your eventual return to the office? The federal government is making available — for free — some waterfront workspaces with killer views that are sure to entice. But there's a catch.

The General Services Administration says the U.S. Coast Guard has decided it no longer needs four of the nation's most picturesque lighthouses, and it's inviting certain types of organizations to take them over at no cost.

The GSA, which has been getting rid of its large inventory of obsolete lighthouses, said Thursday that Beavertail Lighthouse in Jamestown, Rhode Island America's third-oldest lighthouse, and a beacon that defeated British forces torched out of spite in 1779 as they withdrew from the new nation is up for grabs. So are Watch Hill Light in Westerly, Rhode Island, not far from Taylor Swift's beachside mansion; Cleveland Harbor West Pierhead Light in Ohio; and Duluth Harbor North Pierhead Light in Minnesota. Conditionally, that is: The



In this July 7, 2006, file photograph, fishermen cast on the rocky shore at the Beavertail Lighthouse, the third-oldest lighthouse in America, at the tip of Beavertail State Park, on Narragansett Bay, in Jamestown, R.I. Press

government says it'll make the historic lighthouses and their outbuildings available free of charge to federal, state and local agencies; nonprofit organizations; educational and community development agencies; or groups devoted to parks, recreation, culture, or historic preservation. Beavertail Light "has been determined to be excess to the needs of the United States Coast Guard," which is part of the Department of Homeland Security, GSA spokesperson Paul Hughes said in a statement. Beavertail Light has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places since 1977. The 64-foot (19.5-me-

ter) granite lighthouse faces south where Narragansett Bay and Rhode Island Sound meet, offering drop-dead-gorgeous ocean vistas.

All that remains of the original lighthouse is its foundation; it was constructed in 1749 and burned down by British soldiers leaving the Newport area in 1779. The current lighthouse was built in 1856 along with six additional structures totaling 5,171 square feet (480 square meters.)

Hughes said the government is asking interested groups to formally express their interest in the next 60 days, and the National Park Service will review the applications. □

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Editor

Caribbean Speed Printers N.V.
Aruba Bank N.V. Acc. #332668
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RBC Royal Bank Acc. #1330772

Assistant Director

Xiomara Arends

Editors

Liza Koolman (Management assistant)

Richard Brooks

Linda Reijnders

Sales

Linda Reijnders

(linda.reijnders@cspnv.com)

Sulaika Croes

Classifieds

classified@cspnv.com

Distribution and Collection

accounting@bondia.com

Social / Website

Juan Luis Pinto

Pilar Flores

Columnists

Anthony Croes

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Weststraat 22

T: 582-7800

E: news@arubatoday.com

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Morning shows extend the day to cope with viewer erosion



In this combination photo, "Today" host Savannah Guthrie, from left, attends The Hollywood Reporter's annual Most Powerful People in Media cocktail reception on April 11, 2019, in New York, "CBS This Morning" host Gayle King attends "Tina - The Tina Turner Musical" Broadway opening night on Nov. 7, 2019, in New York and "Good Morning America" host Robin Roberts arrives at the NBA Awards on June 24, 2019, in Santa Monica, Calif.

By DAVID BAUDER
AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A recent job promotion came with what seems to be a counterintuitive mandate for NBC News senior vice president Libby Leist: Drum up interest in the "Today" show anytime other than the mornings.

It's a survival strategy for "Today," which celebrates the 70th anniversary of its first broadcast in January. Along with ABC's "Good Morning America" and "CBS This Morning," the pandemic has been rough on the traditional morning shows.

For generations of Americans, the shows have been habitual places to turn to for some news and a check of the traffic and weather as they got ready for work and hustled the kids off to school.

Yet who cares about the traffic and weather if you're not leaving the house?

Viewership is down at all three programs, although to be fair, it is for television in general. But for the morning shows, the loss hits hardest among viewers aged 25-to-54 - working people. In that age group, viewing dropped 22% between the first three months of 2020 and this year at "Today," 24% at "Good Morning America" and 16% at "CBS

This Morning," the Nielsen company said.

There's more than a passing interest in whether or not those viewers resume their morning habit when it's time to return to the office. That 25-to-54 age group is also the demographic used to set advertising rates, and the revenue from these shows is the engine that powers network news divisions.

"Today" is subtly reaching out, reminding people who may be sleeping later at 8 a.m. each day that they can set their DVRs so they don't miss anything. The show is more aggressively hawking material planned for upcoming days to give viewers an incentive for tuning in.

Leist is also spearheading an aggressive effort to make content available on a 24-hour "Today" streaming service that was launched in 2020 primarily for archived material. The show's personalities are involved with podcasts, digital series, newsletters, even TikTok features.

Savannah Guthrie's YouTube show boils interviews down to six minutes, Craig Melvin's series "Dad's Got This" spotlights fathers making a difference, Carson Daly's "Mind Matters" talks about mental health issues. Jenna Bush has her own book club.

"You may wake up with

them, but you'll want to spend more time with them the rest of the day," Leist said.

The morning shows still have news potency, as witnessed by Guthrie's interviews with Liz Cheney and Ellen DeGeneres this week. Yet the assignment given to Leist, who used to produce "Today" each morning, speaks to the initiative's importance to NBC News.

Rivals are trying their own approaches. Two podcasts are attached to "CBS This Morning," and the CBSN streaming service runs an abbreviated version of the show. The show is adding a new wrinkle next week: With anchor Tony Dokoupil out for maternity leave, Drew Barrymore and LeVar Burton will fill in as celebrity guest hosts during the 8 a.m. hour.

"The idea of extending the brand makes so much sense because of the way live viewing is declining these days," said Jim Spaeth, a principal in Sequent Partners, a media consultancy.

Not all, perhaps not even most, of viewership erosion is due to the pandemic. In 2000, during the height of the Katie Couric-Matt Lauer dynasty, the "Today" show was being seen by 7.2 million viewers a day, and less

than half (3.3 million) were watching during the first three months of this year. "Good Morning America" is down 29% during the same period.

Where people once turned on their TVs to get a sense of what happened in the world overnight, now they can grab the smartphone on their bedside table. Podcasts like "The Daily" have established themselves, and cable television offers opinionated alternatives. "It's death by a thousand cuts," said Alice Sylvester, Spaeth's colleague at Sequent Partners.

This year in particular, people who had been obsessed with politics and COVID-19 in 2020 are likely seeking a break. A big chunk of the cable news audience has drifted away for the same reason.

All three morning shows boast deep experience onscreen with the personalities that serve as their centerpieces. Robin Roberts has been a "Good Morning America" co-host since 2005, worked on the show for a decade before that, and viewers have seen her through the ups and downs of health worries.

Guthrie at "Today" and Gayle King at "CBS This Morning" have both been in their roles since 2012.

Both shows survived sexual misconduct scandals that led to the abrupt firings of Lauer and King's partner, Charlie Rose.

Offscreen it's different. The news divisions at ABC and CBS both had turnovers at the top this spring. Showna Thomas has been executive producer of "CBS This Morning" for less than a year, and CBS would not make her available for an interview. The top "Good Morning America" executive since 2014, Michael Corn, left the company abruptly in April. ABC also declined interview requests about its show.

For much of the past few decades, the morning shows are where broadcast network news divisions have run up huge profit margins. Despite so much of the audience drifting away, advertising revenues have stayed pretty steady the past couple of years, according to Kantar Media.

Even though "Good Morning America" has a slightly larger audience, "Today" leads among the younger demographic sought most by advertisers, and thus earns more. Kantar estimated that the NBC show had \$449 million in ad revenue in 2019, and \$473 million in 2020. Its two rivals held fairly steady.

CBS has improved its competitive position within the past year, simply because it is losing its audience at a slower pace than the others. Its morning show is up 22% in viewership since 2000, when it was essentially an afterthought.

Despite ratings declines, the shows are still the best option for reaching the largest amount of viewers in the morning, advertising experts say. Their aging audiences have been a particularly strong target for the pharmaceutical industry.

"The people who are still watching and dedicated to the show is still a valuable audience," said Trey Dickert, media director at Media Two Interactive. "They have a lot of purchasing power." □

Associated Press

Nadal ends losing streak against Zverev with win in Rome

By ANDREW DAMPF

AP Sports Writer

ROME (AP) — Rafael Nadal ended a run of three straight losses to Alexander Zverev with a convincing 6-3, 6-4 win over the German to reach the Italian Open semifinals on Friday. Zverev beat Nadal in straight sets at the same stage in Madrid a week ago and their latest meeting was also one-sided. Nadal raced to 4-0 in the first set and saved all eight break points he faced in the second.

"I played more solid than Madrid. Conditions are different," Nadal said, alluding to the fact that the high-altitude of the Spanish capital allowed Zverev to dominate more with his serve. "Here are little bit more normal conditions. I was able to control a little bit more." Nadal, aiming for a record-extending 10th Rome title, will next face big-serving American Reilly Opelka, who reached his first Masters semifinals by edging Argentine qualifier Federico Delbonis 7-5, 7-6 (2). Novak Djokovic's quarterfinal against Stefanos Tsitsipas was suspended due to rain with Tsitsipas ahead 6-4, 2-1 and up a break in the second. The match, which had already been interrupted for 3 ½ hours before resuming briefly, was scheduled to be completed on Saturday. Another quarterfinal, Andrey Rublev vs. Lorenzo Sonego, didn't get started.



Spain's Rafael Nadal falls on the court as he attempts to return the ball to Germany's Alexander Zverev during their quarter-final match at the Italian Open tennis tournament, in Rome, Friday, May 14, 2021.

In the women's tournament, top-ranked Ash Barty retired from her rainy quarterfinal against 17-year-old Coco Gauff while leading 6-4, 2-1 due to a right arm injury. "The pain was becoming too severe, so it was important that I listen to my body and of course try and do the right thing, knowing that we have a Grand Slam in two weeks," Barty said, referring to the French Open. Barty was coming off a period in which she played finals in three of four tournaments on two continents. "It's a pre-existing injury," Barty said, adding that the arm issue first bothered her when she was "15 or 16 years old," and that "it just pops up every now

and again."

Gauff's opponent in her first clay-court semifinal will be French Open champion Iga Swiatek or two-time Rome champion Elina Svitolina. Their quarterfinal was also postponed.

In the other half of the draw, 2019 Rome champion Karolina Pliskova rallied past 2017 French Open winner Jelena Ostapenko 4-6, 7-5, 7-6 (1) and will play Petra Martic.

Martic eliminated Jessica Pegula 7-5, 6-4 for her biggest result since recently hiring former French Open champion Francesca Schiavone as her coach.

The only real moment of concern for Nadal came when he tripped over the

service line while running down a drop shot when he was serving for the first set. The crowd of about 2,500 let out a collective gasp as Nadal tumbled onto the clay and rolled over onto his back wincing in apparent pain. After putting Nadal's reply away for an easy winner — the Spaniard still managed to get the ball over the net — Zverev hopped over the net to check on the 20-time Grand Slam champion. "Some lines are higher than the rest of court, so when you touch the line it's dangerous," Nadal said. Zverev, the 2017 Rome champion and Madrid winner last weekend, had numerous opportunities to re-

cover from an early break in the second set but Nadal stepped up his game each time and closed it out on his first match point with a perfectly executed serve-and-volley.

"I played a very solid match, with not too many mistakes — playing the way that I have to," Nadal said. "It's an important victory for me against a great player." The 6-foot-11 (2.11-meter) Opelka, not previously known for his clay-court tennis, overwhelmed Delbonis with 18 aces to record his fourth straight-set win of the week.

"I'm surprised. Clay is not really my thing," Opelka said. "It's probably just a fluke. But I'm OK with it."

Opelka also saved all four break points he faced. But it wasn't just his serve that made the difference.

The 47th-ranked Opelka hit a delicate slice volley drop-shot winner in the final game before the tiebreaker and produced a difficult backhand cross-court passing shot to set up the only match point he needed. Opelka entered Rome on a six-match losing streak that included dealing with a bout of COVID-19.

"The first 10 weeks of the year I just didn't play well. It wasn't COVID-related at all," Opelka said. "After you lose eight weeks in a row, the one thing you want to do is practice — not get COVID and be stuck inside for 2 ½ weeks. But I guess it worked out." □

Associated Press

Ewan wins Giro stage in sprint; Valter keeps overall lead

TERMOLI, Italy (AP) — Australian cyclist Caleb Ewan claimed his second sprint victory in the Giro d'Italia and Attila Valter kept the pink jersey after the seventh stage on Friday. Ewan, who rides for the Lotto Soudal team, closed a gap to Fernando Gaviria with about 100 meters remaining and finished just ahead of Davide Cimolai and Tim Merlier.

Ewan, who also won Stage 5, took his fifth career win at the Giro and 50th overall in his career.

"I knew it would be a good finish for me," he said.

"Then it was a question of being smart and a lot of team work, too. ... It was a super hard finish and I had to go deep to win. My legs were absolutely burning."

Ewan took nearly five hours over the mostly flat 181-kilometer (112-mile) leg from Notaresco to Termoli.

Valter remained 11 seconds ahead of Remco Evenepoel overall and 16 seconds ahead of Egan Bernal.

"To pass through the beau-

tiful cities of Italy with people cheering for the pink jersey, I had to pinch myself to realize that it was really me," said Valter, who claimed the lead a day earlier.

The overall standings could be shaken up in Stage 8 on Saturday, a 170-kilometer (106-mile) leg from Foggia to Sanframondi featuring one second-category climb and an uphill finish.

The Giro ends on May 30 in Milan with an individual time trial. □



Australia's Caleb Ewan celebrates winning the seventh stage of the Giro d'Italia cycling race, from Notaresco to Termoli, Italy, Friday, May 14, 2021.

Associated Press

'No secrets' and no certainty in one-of-a-kind NHL playoffs



Tampa Bay Lightning defenseman Luke Schenn, left, passes the puck as Florida Panthers left wing Ryan Lomberg, right, defends during the second period of an NHL hockey game, Monday, May 10, 2021, in Sunrise, Fla.

By **STEPHEN WHYNO**
AP Hockey Writer

There will be no mysteries when Tampa Bay and Florida meet in the first round of the playoffs after facing off eight times this season and twice in the past week. Same deal for Montreal and Toronto, who have played 10 times since mid-January.

"I don't want to say it takes kind of some of the fun out of it, but it does because you know a lot more what to expect," Lightning coach Jon Cooper said.

A strange NHL regular season has given way to a one-of-a-kind playoff tournament for the Stanley Cup. It will feature an opening two rounds of all divisional play for the first time in almost 30 years and re-seed the final four to crown a champion for the first time in league history.

"It's just another thing about our year that's incredibly unique," Vegas general manager Kelly McCrimmon said Friday. "You could see matchups that you would generally only see in a Stanley Cup Final situation, so that's going to add another layer of

uniqueness to an already unique season."

It's so unique that by the time Calgary and Vancouver finish their regular seasons, some first-round playoff series will be two games old. A total of 57 games were postponed this season — 51 for virus-related reasons — so the playoffs open a few days later than planned when Washington hosts Boston on Saturday night.

After expanding to 24 teams to complete the 2020 season, the playoff field is back to the traditional 16 with four from each temporarily realigned division. The first two rounds are a return to the divisional playoff format the NHL used from 1982-93, and things should be even spicier after a season of all divisional play.

"There's really no secrets," said Carolina's Rod Brind'Amour, one of six head coaches in the playoffs who played in that old format. "It's going to be too much going on, both teams trying to do the same things and we're each in each other's way, so something's going to give."

Cooper thinks Game 1 of

each series will better resemble a Game 2 or 3 since teams won't need any time to get familiar with each other. They've had at least eight chances to get acquainted over the past four months.

"Bad blood's already there, typically if you've played a team eight times and both teams are in the playoffs," Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy said. "Instead of sort of a buildup over time where gradually you get to Game 4 and all of a sudden now the nastiness starts, you'll just see it sooner. Familiarity will breed contempt quicker."

Nashville GM David Poile believes that familiarity will also breed better series. The league has tried for years to gin up rivalries, and while these aren't the circumstances anyone wanted, there's no love lost in any of the eight first-round matchups.

"There's been a lot to, I guess, not like about this year, but one of the things is playing these same teams and building up these rivalries," Poile said. "It's really, really good, and I think it's going to make for good

hockey."

There will likely be different styles of hockey across the divisions: Nashville-Carolina and Tampa Bay-Florida in the Central, Boston-Washington and the New York Islanders vs. Pittsburgh in the East, St. Louis-Colorado and Minnesota-Vegas in the West and Montreal-Toronto and Winnipeg-Edmonton in the North. For one, there are still no fans allowed in arenas in Canada, while every arena in the U.S. will have a crowd of at least 4,000 to start the playoffs.

"By this time, I think we're pretty used to it with no fans," Winnipeg forward Nate Thompson said. "In the bubble (last summer), every team had to create their own momentum, their own excitement."

There's no bubble this time, and the NHL is even relaxing pandemic protocols for each team that has 85% of its traveling party fully vaccinated. Even after he and the Lightning won the Cup in quarantine as bubble hockey champions, Tampa Bay center Yanni Gourde said "it's a completely different vibe" this year and is excited to get back to shar-

Associated Press

ing the playoffs with family. "It does feel a lot more normal, or like it used to be in the years past," Bruins captain Patrice Bergeron said. "Traveling, two games on the road, two games back at home and then 1-1-1, so it's back to regular playoffs, and kind of looking forward to that."

Hockey players and coaches know better than to look too far forward. But reseeding the final four provides the potential for cross-continental semifinals and Cup Final matchups that would ordinarily never be possible.

Boston and Toronto could meet for the Cup after several recent first-round series. It could be Washington-Carolina, Edmonton-Vegas or Nashville-St. Louis.

"We'd love to find out," McCrimmon said. "It'll be really interesting to see what those games are like, to see how teams are playing, and of course there's so many things that are going to change between now and then. ... Just through the eyes of a hockey fan, that's going to be really neat to see what happens." □